

twisted cables of 100 wires each, wrapped in cotton. In 1900, New York had 56,000 phones; eight years later the figure had grown to 310,000, tended by more than 5,000 girls.

To think of the telephone industry today, it is necessary to toss around figures in the billions; but in those early days a million was a staggering figure. The Bell company, parent body of the industry, secured its first million dollars of capital in 1879; it acquired its first million dollars in earnings in 1882; it began to send a million messages a day in 1888; it installed its one millionth telephone in 1898.

The first White House telephone was placed in use during the first administration of Grover Cleveland in the middle 1880's. Cleveland himself hated the phone, and although he would occasionally answer it personally if it was ringing, most of the telephone conversations were carried on by the servants.

The first president to really utilize the potential of the telephone was William McKinley. In addition to considering telephone conversations diverting pastimes, McKinley foresaw their political value. During the Republican presidential convention in Chicago in 1896, McKinley sat glued to the telephone at his home in Canton, Ohio, and listened to the cheers of the crowd when his name was placed in nomination. Long-distance communications were now completed throughout most of the east and midwest; so the Republican nominee was able to direct through personal telephone conversation the activities of his campaign managers in thirty-eight states.

Not until the telephone began to acquire widespread popularity did the song writers seize it as a theme which could be exploited; and by the late 1880's they were beginning to recognize its potential as subject matter for the singer and the piano. The first appeals were to the sentimentalists, particularly those who were stirred by songs about youngsters. What could be more appealing than a child's gesture of love for a parent? So in 1888 we find a song composed by H. F. Sefton, with words by John Imrie, bearing the title "The Kiss Through the Telephone." It goes like this:

The Telephone, in merry tone
Rang "tinkelty tinkelty tink!"
I put my ear close up to hear,
And what did I hear, do you think?
"Papa, hello! 'Tis me, you know!"
The voice of my own little Miss.
"You went away from home today,
And never gave me a kiss!

It was a mistake, I was not awake,
Before you went out of the house;
I thought that a kiss would not be amiss
If I gave it as sly as a mouse!
So here goes, Papa, and one from Mamma,
And another when you can come home;
Just answer me this, is it nice to kiss
When you want thro' the dear Telephone?"

In 1889, Thomas Westendorf, he who had brought out twelve years earlier "The Wondrous Telephone," decided that he too would present a little girl who wanted to kiss papa. His song, almost a replica of that just described, was called "Kissing Papa Through the Telephone." His little girl, like the other child, was asleep when the old man stole off, so she rang him up, without fear of guilt that he might be involved in some important business transaction. Not at all; she is confident that:

He's so good and kind that he does not mind
If I should disturb him, and I know full well
He will smile and say when he comes today
That it made him glad to hear me ring the bell.

CHORUS: Ting a ling, ting a ling, hello!
Is that you papa? I am waiting here alone;
Ting a ling, ting a ling, hello!
I want to kiss you thro' the Telephone.

For years, the public responded to the popular song describing the sentiments of the small child. The telephone song with the most touching appeal of all was written by Charles K. Harris in 1901. Harris, one of the greatest song writers of the turn of the century, who gave us such all-time favorites as "After the Ball" and "Break the News to Mother," and who was a successful music publisher besides, tugged at the heartstrings of the country with "Hello Central, Give Me Heaven." The title page depicts a sweet-faced little girl whose stage name was Baby Lund speaking into one of the square wall boxes of the period, while a battery of long-distance operators are "plugging away" in the background. It is questionable whether any of them is acquainted with Heaven's telephone number, but Baby Lund has confidence. Pathetically she sings:

Papa I'm so sad and lonely,
Sobbed a tearful little child.
Since dear mama's gone to heaven,
Papa darling you've not smiled;
I will speak to her and tell her,